



CITY OF SOMERVILLE
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
April 8, 2021
Meeting Minutes

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Monthly Meeting

Present

Lara Versari, Commissioner

Mike Henson, Commissioner

Christopher Spicer-Hankle, Commissioner

Nancy Bacci, Deputy Director

Members of the Public Present

Elaine Schear

Lindsey Green

Derrick Rice

Amy Henson

Guest

Michael Cox (Exec. Dir. Black and Pink MA)

Immigrant Stories project

Sidd did additional work on the draft letter to Somerville immigrant restaurant owners. He also put together some milestones for the project to track progress. The letter is shared to the HRC and its volunteer group through google docs. Feedback directly onto the letter is welcome.

Also, if anyone is able to build upon the project milestones that Sidd created and help to track progress toward the goal, please notify any of the commissioners.

Guest Speaker Michael Cox, Executive Director Black and Pink Massachusetts

Commissioner Christopher invited the Mr. Cox to address the commission about the work his organization has done to support sex workers. His organization Black and Pink Massachusetts does outreach and supports sex workers, who are stigmatized and marginalized by mainstream society. Goals for the organization are to create more welcoming spaces, transform conditions, and destigmatize sex work.

Another main goal of Black and Pink Massachusetts is to decriminalize sex work. More information can be obtained from the site decrimMA.org. Some ways that the organization supports sex workers is by posting bail and being present at court hearings.

Black and Pink Massachusetts has signed on to some statements condemning Anti-Asian Hate and urges the HRC to do the same.

Commissioner Christopher attended online Hollaback Training

He shared tips that he learned from the training, including checking in with the victim if one is unable to stop the incident as it is occurring.

Commissioner Christopher will also lead the HRC in mustering support to sign on to a statement condemning Anti-Asian hate. He will also help to organize a show-of-support event in solidarity with victims of Anti-Asian abuse. Commissioners Lara and Mike agreed to attend supplemental meeting to push these efforts forward.

Agenda Distribution

Volunteer Elaine asked about distribution procedures of the agenda. Nancy confirmed that they are posted to the HRC page in the city's website. The commissioners will try to ensure that the agenda is emailed directly to regular attendees in the future.

Commissioner and volunteer background information

Volunteer Elaine expressed interest in getting to know the group of commissioner and volunteers and their backgrounds. The commissioners will spend a little more time at the start of each meeting for the attendees to share their backgrounds, particularly with newer attendees.